

NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6145
BILL MARSH/MUNICH

SEPTEMBER 19, 1978

BERLIN WARNINGS

ANNCR:

THE SOVIET UNION HAS CHARGED WEST GERMANY WITH VIOLATIONS OF THE FOUR-POWER AGREEMENT GOVERNING THE TRANSIT ROUTES BETWEEN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC AND WEST BERLIN. WE HAVE A REPORT FROM VOA CORRESPONDENT BILL MARSH IN MUNICH.

VOICE:

THE SPECIFIC SOVIET COMPLAINT IS THAT THE TRANSIT ROUTES CONNECTING THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC WITH WEST BERLIN ARE BEING MISUSED. ACCORDING TO RADIO MOSCOW, WEST BERLIN AND WEST GERMAN CITIZENS ARE ENGAGING IN WHAT THE RADIO CALLS "SYSTEMATIC PROVOCATION", "ESPIONAGE" AND "TERRORIST ACTS". THE RADIO FURTHER CHARGES THAT CITIZENS OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC ARE BEING ILLEGALLY ABDUCTED ACROSS THE BORDER INTO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. ALL THESE THINGS, RADIO MOSCOW SAYS, ARE DIRECT VIOLATIONS OF THE QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT GOVERNING THE TRANSIT ROUTES. IT ADD THAT THE SOVIET UNION "CANNOT REMAIN INDIFFERENT IF SOMEONE TRIES TO MISUSE THIS TRANSIT AGREEMENT TO THE DETRIMENT OF ITS ALLY, THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC."

EVEN AS RADIO MOSCOW WAS BROADCASTING ITS COMPLAINT, TWO FORMER DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES WERE MEETING IN EAST BERLIN, AND SEVERAL WEST GERMAN COMMENTATORS TODAY SEE A DIRECT CONNECTION BETWEEN THAT MEETING AND THE SOVIET BROADCAST. THE MEETING WAS BETWEEN KENNETH RUSH, A FORMER AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO BONN, AND PIOTR ABRASSIMOV, CURRENTLY THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO EAST BERLIN. IT WAS THESE TWO MEN WHO LED THE NEGOTIATING TEAMS THAT ULTIMATELY PRODUCED THE QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT OF 1971 - AN AGREEMENT THAT WENT FURTHER THAN ANY OTHER ACCORD IN EASING

RELATIONS BETWEEN EAST AND WEST GERMANY AND DEFUSING THE BERLIN POWDER KEG.

OFFICIALLY, THE MEETING BETWEEN MR. RUSH AND MR. ABRASSIMOV WAS A SOCIAL SESSION, A TIME FOR RECOLLECTIONS AND SMALL TALK. BUT FEW WEST GERMAN COMMENTATORS BELIEVE THIS. THE RESPECTED FRANKFURTHER ALLEGEMEINE SAYS IN ITS LEAD EDITORIAL THAT THE MEETING MUST BE REGARDED AT LEAST AS "SEMI-OFFICIAL", AND THAT STATEMENTS ALLEGING THAT IT WAS JUST A SOCIAL MEETING 'DESERVE TO BE DISREGARDED', THE NEUE OSNABRUECKER ZEITUNG COMMENTS ALONG THE SAME LINE, STRESSING THAT 'WHAT IS MORE REALISTIC IS THAT THE TWO MEN MADE AN INITIAL ATTEMPT TO ELIMINATE TWO SERIOUS BONES OF CONTENTION THAT MAY TRIGGER ANOTHER BERLIN CRISIS'.

THESE TWO "BONES OF CONTENTION" HAVE IN FACT BEEN GETTING A LOT OF ATTENTION IN WEST GERMANY BECAUSE IT'S KNOWN THAT THEY IRRITATE MOSCOW. ONE IS THE INDIRECT PARTICIPATION OF WEST BERLIN IN ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. THE OTHER IS THE FACT THAT WEST BERLIN MAYOR DIETRICH STOBBE IS ABOUT TO TAKE HIS TURN AS PRESIDENT OF THE BUNDESRAAT -- THE UPPER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT IN BONN. THE SOVIET UNION TAKES EXCEPTION TO BOTH EVENTS, CONTENDING THEY ARE ILLEGAL ATTEMPTS TO MAKE WEST BERLIN PART OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. WHEN ALL THESE ELEMENTS ARE SEEN TOGETHER, THE FRANKFURTHER ALLEGEMEINE SAYS, IT'S HARDLY A SURPRISE THAT THE SOVIETS AND AMERICANS SHOULD TAKE UP CONTACT. THE PAPER POINTS OUT THAT BERLIN IS JUST AS MUCH A BAROMETER OF SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS AS IT IS A TEST OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO GERMANY'S.

WJL/PY